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No. 24.

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The Haskum Homestead.

By Wm. Organ.



ADOLPH E. REIM,

Publisher,

MILWAUKEE,

WISCONSIN.



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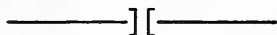


The Haskum Homestead.

A Rural Comedy Sketch.



By Wm. Organ.



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CHARACTERS.

SLEEPY SAM.....A Chore Boy.
JOEL HASKUM.....An Old Farmer.
FRANK HARTMAN.....A Fashionable Boarder.
JASON SKINNER.....Town Constable.
MRS. HASKUM.....Joel's Wife.
PEGGY.....A Child of Misfortune.
SCENE—*Living-room in the HASKUM HOMESTEAD.*
TIME—*Evening.*

THE HASKUM HOMESTEAD.

SCENE—*Living-room in the HASKUM HOMESTEAD. Evening. Doors R. 1., R. 4. and L. c. Exterior backing to L. c., representing a landscape. Window R. c. Desk c. at back. Chair in front of desk. Table c. down stage. Lighted lamp on table. Chairs R. & L. of table. Sofa L. down stage. Fire-place and mantel in L. 2. flat. Armchair in front of fire-place. Chair in corner between L. c. and L. 4. Chair midway between R. 1. and R. 4. Lights full up.*

(*As curtain rises, Mrs. HASKUM enters R. 4.*).

Mrs. Haskum—Land sakes! I do wonder what can be keeping Joel! He should uv been home an hour ago. I never saw such a man in all my life. Never knows enough to come home until the last cat is skinned. Peggy! Peggy!

(*Enter PEGGY R. 4.*).

Peggy—Watcher want?

Mrs. Haskum—Go bring me an armful of wood. Supper will be stone cold.

Peggy—Hully gee! More wood? Let Sam do it. I've fetched in purty near the hull pile now.

Mrs. Haskum—Do as I tell you. That lazy lout wouldn't bring it in in a week. I suppose he's somewheres up in the hay-mow asleep. That boy don't earn his salt.

Peggy—Well, I s'pose I'll have ter. Work, work, nuthin but work! Why wasn't I born rich, 'stead of purty?

Mrs. Haskum—Will you hurry up? Joel and that city boarder may be here at any moment.

Peggy—Aw, slush wid dat city boarder! I s'pose he's one of dem plug hat swells. Dey give me a kink in de liver. (*Exit L. c.*).

Mrs. Haskum—If that ain't the sassiest girl I ever saw! Between her and Sam, they will drive me crazy. I wish Joel would hurry up. I begin to feel worried. I hope he didn't have any trouble getting the money. I will be glad when the mortgage is paid off. It just keeps me worrying and fretting all the time. Hello! Someone coming now. That must be Joel.

(Enter JOEL HASKUM and FRANK HARTMAN L. C.).

Joel—Kum right in, Mr. Hartman, and make yourself tew hum. We air just plain kentry folks and hain't much for style. But you will be treated right as long as you air with us.

Frank—(Laying his hat on table). Thank you. I assure you that it will be a treat to enjoy your quiet country life after so much excitement in the city.

Joel—Matilda, let me introduce yew tew Mr. Hartman.

Mrs. Haskum—How do you do?

Frank—Delighted, I am sure!

Joel—Matilda, yew show Mr. Hartman tew his rum. I s'pose I'll have tew put up ther hosses myself. That confounded boy, yew never can find him. I'll be back in a few minutes; then we'll hev supper. (Exit L. C.).

(Enter PEGGY L. C., with armful of wood bumps first against JOEL, dropping some of the wood; she picks it up clumsily, and as she turns, runs against FRANK, dropping sticks on his toes, etc. BUS: ad lib).

Peggy—Why don'tcher git outen de way?

Mrs. Haskum—Peggy, will you look where you're going? Right this way, Mr. Hartman; I will show you to your room.

Frank—(Aside to PEGGY). You impudent little brat!

Peggy—Aw, go fall down stairs.

(Exunt MRS. HASKUM & FRANK R. 1.).

Peggy—Holy smokes! Where have I seen dat guy before? I coitenly have cast me lamps on his mug somewhere. If he's de bloke wot I tinks he is, he coitenly ain't out here for his health. I'll keep me peepers on um, just fer luck. (Exit R. 4.).

(Enter SAM L. C., yawning).

Sam—Gee whiz! A man can't git no rest around this durned place. Had a nice, cosy place in the hay-mow, when the old man comes along and gives me the toe of his boot. There hain't no one here. Mebbe I kin ketch a few winks on the sofer. Gut tew git some sleep somehow. (Lies down on sofa).

(Enter MRS. HASKUM R. 1.).

Mrs. Haskum—So there you are, you lazy, good-for-nothing lout! Now mog yourself right out and get me an armful of wood.

Sam—(Rising from sofa). Gol durn the luck! A feller can't git a minit's rest nowhere. Wood! Wood! Thet durn stove burns more wood in a day then yew kin cut in a week. (Xes. up L. C.).

(Re-enter JOEL; bumps against SAM, knocking him down. BUS.).

Joel—Consarn your lazy hide! Kain't yew see where yew air goin'? Git aout of hyar naow. (*Gives SAM a kick*).

(*Exit SAM L. C.*).

Mrs. Haskum—I hope you didn't have any trouble getting the money, Joel.

Joel—(*Holding up box*). Hyar she is, Matilda. Three thousand dollars!

Mrs. Haskum—Why, Joel, you haven't left that out in the wagon all this time?

Joel—Why, cartinly! What could happen tew it?

Mrs. Haskum—You can't tell. You know Job Perkin's store was robbed last week.

Joel—(*Laughing*). Yes, they sartinly made a great haul. A dollar and thutty odd cents were stolen.

Mrs. Haskum—You want to put it in a good safe place.

Joel—I guess right thar in at air desk will be as safe as anywhar. I will lock it up good. The fust thing in the morning I'll go and pay off thet durn mortgage.

Mrs. Haskum—That will be a great load off my mind, Joel.

Joel—Mine tew, Matilda. (*Places box in desk*).

(*FRANK enters R. 1.*).

Frank—(*Aside*). I wonder what the old fool has there? It may pay me to find out. (*To JOEL*). I hope I haven't kept you waiting?

Joel—Not at all! We air a leetle late with supper tew night, but we will make up fur lost time at the table.

Frank—I certainly think that I can do my share to-night.

Joel—Thet's the way I like tew hear yew talk. When a man sets daown at my table, I want tew see him tear intew it as though he meant bizness. Come right this way, Mr. Hartman.

(*Exunt MRS. H., JOEL & FRANK, R. 4.*).

(*Re-enter SAM, with arm full of wood L. C.; stubs his toe and falls on the table, crushing FRANK'S hat. Continue BUS. as desired. Re-enter PEGGY R. 4.*).

Peggy—Whoa, Sleepy, where yer goin'?

Sam—Gosh durn thet kerpet! It's always trippin' me up.

Peggy—Why don'tcher wake up and go where yer lookin'?

Sam—Gosh, I guess I scrunched thet hat a leetle.

Peggy—I guess yer did. Youse'll git yer head scrunched when old Hartman gits hold of yer. He'll make hash out of yer. Hully gee! But dere's some class ter dat lid now. Pipe der new style. Looks like one of dem opry hats. Let's see if I kin improve it any.

(*Kicks hat across stage*). Dere, dat's de downfall of dat sky-piece.

Sam—(*Edging up to PEGGY*). Peggy, hev yew made up your mind yet?

Peggy—Aw, fade away. Youse ain't goin' ter perpose again, are yer?

Sam—Oh, Peggy, won't yew please?

(*MRS. HASKUM calls off R.*:— Sam, Sam! Where's that wood?

Sam—Gosh hang it! Somebody always got tew butt in! (*Exit with wood R. 4*).

Peggy—I'll stake me loife dat feller Hartman's de same guy dat was mixed up in dat affair in New York er few years ergo. It's er long time since I left de old boig, but not so long but what I kin 'member dat bloke. Hartman! Gee, but dat don't seem like de old name. But mebbe dat's one got up special fer the 'casion. It's got me goat what he kin be er doing outen dis miserable dump. Ten ter one he's trying ter dodge de perleece.

(*Enter SAM R. 4*).

Sam—I'll dew it this time or bust a galus. (*Xes. and kneels before PEGGY*). Peggy, for the seventy-ninth time, I ask yew tew be my wife.

Peggy—(*Taking him by the collar and yanking him to his feet*). Git up outen dat. Does yer want ter ruin dem pants?

Sam—Oh, Peggy, be serious.

Peggy—I am serious. Dere de only pants yer got.

Sam—Dew yew want tew break my heart?

Peggy—Youse ain't got any heart. All yer got is er gizzard.

Sam—Won't yew marry me, Peggy?

Peggy—Aw, take er sneak. Youse grate on me noives. Me hitch ter an ungainly lookin' ting like youse? Well, not ernuff ter notice it. Why, Sleepy, youse couldn't even sweep off me back stoop.

Sam—Yew might dew wors'n marry'n me.

Peggy—Impossible! Dere's no class ter youse whatever.

Sam—Yew think yew air smart, don't yew? You hain't so all-fired much fur style yourself.

Peggy—Is dat so? I want youse ter strictly understand dat when I was in New York, I uster travel in de most select class on de East side.

Sam—Why in tarnation didn't yew stay thar, then?

Peggy—Cut it out, Sleepy, youse is trespassin' on me family history.

Sam—Hev yew a histry?

Peggy—Sure ting; but it would make sloppy readin'. But if youse

kin stand de strain I'll rip if off.

Peggy—If yer can't stand it, set down.

(JOEL enters at this point and overhears the conversation).

Peggy—You see, Sleepy, me fadder croaked when I was er kid. I can't 'member much, 'bout me fadder, but some time after his death mudder hitched ergain, and dis bloke turned out ter be one of de meanest, low-down skunks dat ever drew breath. He made me mudder's life miserable, treated her wois'n er doig. Te uster git inter all kinds of scrapes, and one day he forged his employer's note fer er large sum of money. He was found guilty, convicted, and sent ter de coop. Dat awful disgrace broke me poor mudder's heart, and, not long after, she died and I was left alone in de woild ter shift fer meself de best I could. Dat's de position Mr. and Mrs. Haskum found me in over five years argo on de streets of New York. Lord knows what would have become of me if dey hadn't scooped me up dat day. Dey has benn both fadder and mudder ter me, Sleepy, and God knows how I ever kin repay dem.

Joel—You kin repay us by sayin' nothin' about it. I just kum in arter my pipe and I overheard your conversation. Yew have been a good gal, Peggy, and yew'll never want fur a hum as long as this old roof kin shelter yew. *(Takes pipe from mantel. BUS: and Exit R. 4.)*

Peggy—Gee, ain't dat bunch troo eatin' yet? I'm so darn hungry I could eat er door knob. I'm goin' in and see if dere's any feed left. Comin' in, Sleepy? *(Exit R. 4.)*

Sam—I'm tew durn tired tew eat. I'm goin' in and lay down. *(Xes. stage toward L. 4.)*

(Enter JASON SKINNER L. C., bumps against SAM. BUS: and exit SAM L. 4.)

Jason—Yew tarnation young fool, kain't yew see whar yew air goin'? I'll break thet young scamp's neck yit.

(Enter MRS. HASKUM R. 4.)

Mrs. Haskum—Why, good evening, Jason!

Jason—Evenin', Matildy. Fine evenin' aout.

Mrs. Haskum—Yes, it is. Have a chair, Jason.

Jason—*(Sitting L. of table)*. Don't keer if I dew. Air Joel anywhar abaout?

Mrs. Haskum—He is in eating supper. We are late to-night. Joel has just got back from town. Have you seen Sam anywhere, Jason?

Jason—Yes, consarn him, I seed him! He bumped agin' me and putty nigh bruck my back when I came in. He went in that air room,

and went durn lively tew.

Mrs. Haskum—(Shouts). Sam! Sam!

(Enter SAM L. 4).

*Sam—*Now what in thunder dew yew want?

*Mrs. Haskum—*Go bring me another armful of wood to get breakfast with in the morning.

*Sam—*Great horn-spoon! Hev I gut tew bring in wood all night long? *(Exit L. C.).*

*Jason—*I'll be cogswoggled if I kin see what Joel keeps thet good-fur-nothin' lout hangin' araound fur. His hide hain't wuth shoe strings.

*Mrs. Haskum—*Oh, Joel keeps him for the few chores he does. He only gives him his board and what few clothes he needs. Lord knows he ain't worth that.

*Jason—*I should say not. I'd bust his consarned head fur him, if I had him.

*Mrs. Haskum—*I must be going back. I'll send Joel right out; he must be through by this time.

*Jason—*All right, Matildy.

(Exit MRS. HASKUM R. 4. SAM enters L. C. with wood; stubs his toe, falls against JASON, knocking him out of chair, &c., BUS: ad lib. JOEL enters R. 4.).

*Joel—*What's the matter, Jason? Did he upset yew?

*Jason—*I should say he did. I'll kill thet gosh durn fool yit.

Joel—(Sitting R. of table). Matilda tells me yew wish tew see me. *(Exit SAM R. 4).*

*Jason—*I noticed yew had a stranger with yew when yew druv by my haouse tew-night.

*Joel—*Yes, a gentleman from the city. He is going tew board with us fur a few weeks. He's tired of the rush and excitement of the city, and wants a few weeks of quiet rest. Come naow, Jason, yew bein't going and try tew mix him up with this hyar robbery bizness. Every stranger thet happens araound yew light right on tew. Yew will be getting yourself in trouble yet, Jason.

*Jason—*I hain't lightin' on tew nobuddy in'ticular. But, by cod-fish, it's abaout time a stop was put tew this durn bizness. Hyar last week, Job Perkin's store was busted intew. and not long afore thet old Josh Green had his hen-roost robbed. I tell yew, Joel, it's time suthin' was done, and I as constable of this hyar taown feel it my solemn dooty tew run daown these fellers; and by the jump-ing jingoes, I air goin' tew dew it, if it takes me thutty years.

Joel—(Aside). I guess he'll need thirty years, all right.

(Enter FRANK R. 4).

Frank—Well, Mr. Haskum, I feel much better after that good meal. I don't know when I have enjoyed a meal so well.

Joel—I am right glad of that. Mr. Hartman, let me introduce tew yew Mr. Jason Skinner, our town constable.

Frank—Glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Skinner.

Jason—(Strutting up to FRANK and tapping his badge). Howdy! Yew air a stranger araround these parts, I take it.

Frank—Yes, I was never here before in my life.

Jason—I want tew know. Then let me tell yew thet yew kum in a dum bad time.

Frank—How's that?

Jason—Perhaps yew haven't heerd abaout them air robberies round hyar of late?

Frank—No, can't say that I have.

Jason—Well, Job Perkins' store was robbed last week and a dollar and thutty-seven cents in money taken, 'sides several plugs of terbacco, and every stranger thet comes round hyar is being watched like a hawk.

Frank—I see; you mean that I might be suspected?

Jason—Yew kin put it thet way if yew like.

Frank—But haven't you any clew as to who the guilty parties are?

Jason—Not yet; but my chowder, I'll ferret this thing aout, or my name hain't Jason Skinner. I've been constable of this hyar taown fur the past seven years, and I want yew tew understand thet I know my bizness. It takes an all-fired smart critter what kin git the best of Jason Skinner, constable.

Frank—I don't doubt it. I hope you catch them, Mr. Skinner. I am going up to my room, Mr. Haskum. I'll be down shortly.

Joel—Dew; I want tew have a talk with yew afore yew go tew bed.

(Exit FRANK R. 1.).

Jason—Joel, I don't like the looks of thet feller. He'll bear watching.

Joel—Nonsense, Jason. Yew air always suspectin' someone. He don't know any more abaout it than yew do, and yew don't know nuthin' abaout it.

Jason—Is thet so? S'pose yew think I don't know my bizness! But I'll show yew yit. I am going tew shift this thing clear through tew the bottom. I have never yit lost my man. Evenin', Joel, evenin'!

(*Exit L. C.*).

Joel—Evenin', Jason. Poor Jason. Never yit lost his man, eh? Gosh, guess he's right abaout thet, for he's never yit faound one tew lose.

(*Enter FRANK R. 1.*).

Joel—Take a cheer thar, Mr. Hartman. So yew air frum Noo York, eh? (*Sitting L. of table.*)

Frank—(*Sitting R. of table.*) Yes, I was born and brought up in New York City.

Joel—Dew tell. Gosh, but you must know a heap about the place by this time.

Frank—Yes, I am pretty well acquainted around there.

Joel—I was never there but once. Thet were several years ago. I didn't have time tew look araound much, but by what leetle I seed of it, I took it tew be a right smart sort of taown. Matilda was with me thet time, and yew know haow it is with them wimmin folks? Watch yew like a cat would a mouse. I s'pose she was afeered I'd git tew cuttin' up if I went alone. I'd like tew go daown all by myself once. I'll bet the half soles on my old boots thet I would see the sights, if it cost me tew dollars. I saw more purty gals thar in five minits than I seed araound hyar in all my life. That's haow we kum by Peggy. We brought her hum with us.

Frank—Is that so? I was sure she was from New York by her style.

Joel—Yes; we found the poor child in the street, cryin' as though her heart would break—said she had no hum—mother nad jist died. We felt sorry for her and brought her hum, and she has been with us ever since. Matilda wouldn't know what tew dew without Peggy.

Frank—(*Aside.*) Great Heavens! Is it impossible that's the same girl?

Joel—What's the matter, Mr. Hartman? Yew look sorter worked up.

Frank—Oh, it's nothing. Your story of the girl touched me, that's all. Have you lived here long, Mr. Haskum?

Joel—I should say so! Born and brought up hyar. This farm has been in our family for years and years. But durn my old hide, the way things looked a few days ago, I thought I would have tew see the old place change hands.

Frank—You don't say so?

Joel—Yes, yew see it air this way. Old Deacon Ford holds a mortgage of three thousand dollars on this place, and it air due to-morrer.

Deacon Ford is abaout the meanest durn cuss thet ever trod in shoe-leather. He swore he would sell me aout if I couldn't meet thet mortgage tew-morrer. I tell yew thet it made me scratch gravel tew git thet threee thousand together, but by jingoes, I done it; and arter this thing is squared up, if I don't give the blamed old skinflint the consarnedest layin' aout he ever heerd tell on, it's 'cause my name ain't Joel Haskum!

Frank—But I should think that you would be afraid of having so much money about the house with these robberies going on around here.

Joel—Shucks! Don't yew take any stock in what Jase Skinner says. He's allus howlin' abaout somebuddy stealin' suthin'. Gut an idee thet he's quite a 'tective. Lord, he couldn't ketch the chicken-pox. Most likely these robberies he tells on is some pranks cut up by the village boys. No, Mr. Hartman, I feel jist as safe with my money in this house as though it were in the Savin's Bank.

Frank—(*Aside—glancing toward desk*). That must have been what he was hiding when I came in.

(*Enter MRS. HASKUM R. 4*).

Mrs. Haskum—Joel, have you looked after the stock to-night?

Joel—No, Matilda; I'll 'tend tew it right away. Yew'll have tew excuse me, Mr. Hartman. (*Exit L. C.*).

Frank—Certainly, certainly, don't neglect your business on my account. I am rather tired and I think I will retire, if you will permit me. Good-night, Mrs. Haskum. (*Exit R. 1*).

Mrs. Haskum—Good-night, Mr. Hartman. Good-night!

(*BUS: & exit MRS. H. R. 4. Re-enter FRANK R. 1*).

Frank—So, I can't even come out here in this out-of-the-way place and hide in peace. I'll stake my life that's the same girl, and I'm sure she knows who I am, for she eyed me very suspiciously to-night. I thought this the last place on earth where I should be found out, and then butt into that confounded brat the first thing. She would give me away in a minute. I think the safest thing I can do is to clear out of here—and the quicker the better. But before I go, I think I had better appropriate that little three thousand. Three thousand is a mere trifle for me to bother with, but this is 'most too easy to let slip by. No one around—I'll see if I can get in that desk. (*Xes. and tries desk*). Locked—hang it! And I have lost my skeleton keys. I can't break it open; it would make too much noise. Hello! Someone coming?

(*Enter SAM R. 4., yawning*).

Sam—Durn it! I wonder if I kin git a chance tew go tew bed tew-night?

Frank—(*Aside*). That boy is only half-witted. I'll bet for a few dollars I can get him to get me the key to that desk. (*Aloud*) Say, boy, want to make ten dollars?

Sam—Not if it's hard work.

Frank—It is very easy.

Sam—And I git ten dollars?

Frank—Yes!

Sam—Gosh, ten dollars is a big lot of money.

Frank—Yes, it is, and it's yours for a very small favor.

Sam—I'll dew it if yew will give me the ten fust.

Frank—(*Handing him money*). Here it is! Now, do you know where the old man keeps the key to that desk?

Sam—Yep; what do yew want it fur?

Frank—I gave the old man a tin box to take care of for me until morning, but now I find that I must use it to-night.

Sam—Why don't yew git the old man tew git it fur yew?

Frank—Why, the household is all quiet; I hate to disturb anyone. It will be all right—I can explain it to the old man in the morning. Will you get the key?

Sam—Fur ten dollars? Gosh, I'd sell yew the hull durned place fur fifteen. (*Exit SAM R. 4.*)

Frank—So easy! Well, old man, I guess you won't pay off any mortgage with that money to-morrow. I'll have just about time to catch that last train. It's a two mile walk to the station, but I guess I'm good for it.

(*Re-enter SAM R. 4.*)

Sam—Hyar's the key.

Frank—Did anyone see you?

Sam—Nope, not a soul!

Frank—(*Opens desk, &c. BUS:*). Hello! Someone coming! We mustn't let them see us—they might think we were trying to steal something. Here, take this and go into that room. I will let you know when they are gone.

(*Exit SAM with box, L. 4. Enter JOEL L. C.*)

Joel—Hello, Mr. Hartman. Didn't go tew bed yit, eh?

Frank—I thought I'd have a smoke before I retired.

Joel—I see. Set up as long as yew like. Sorter tired myself, and I think as how I'll go to roost. Good-night. (*Exit R. 4.*)

Frank—Goodnight. Whew, that was a close shave! (*Xes to L. 4.*)

All right, Sam.

(Enter SAM L. 4.).

Sam—Are they gone?

Frank—(Taking box). Yes. (Aside). I'll go back up-stairs for a bluff to put that fool off his guard. (Exit R. 1.).

Sam—Ten dollars. Gosh, but that's the most money I ever seed in all my life. Won't I be sporty naow? I'll git me a brand new suit. I saw a stunning suit daown tew the village fur three dollars and a half. And I'll get me a red necktie and a new hat. Mebbe Peggy will change her mind when she sees me all togged up. (Exit L. C., whistling).

(Re-enter FRANK R. 1.).

Frank—There—I guess I can sneak out unobserved now. Confound it, where's my hat? I left it there on the table when I came in to-night. (Xes and picks up hat). Look at that hat! Ain't that a sight? Well, I had better get out of here while the coast is clear. (Exit L. C.).

(Enter JOEL R. 4.).

Joel—I guess I'll have a look and see if thet thar money's all right, afore I go tew bed. I kin rest better if I know it's safe. (Tries desk). Why, it's unlocked, and the key is still hyar in the lock. Am I gittin' so durn furgitful as that? I could uv swore I locked thet desk. (Opens desk). Where is it? It's gone! My God! I have been robbed!

(Enter MRS. HASKUM R. 4.).

Mrs. Haskum—Why Joel, what on earth's the matter?

Joel—Matter? Everything's the matter! Tew-morrer the old homestead, where I spent my childhood days, will pass out of our hands forever.

Mrs. Haskum—Why, Joel, how you do talk! You have got the money to meet the mortgage.

Joel—I had it. But now it's gone.

Mrs. Haskum—Gone?

Joel—Yes, gone. How I drudged and slaved tew git thet three thousand tewgether, and now it's gone—stolen! Tew-morrer old Deacon Ford will demand his money, and I haven't a cent. But, bu jin-goes, I'll find out who's at the bottom of this. Whar's Peggy?

Mrs. Haskum—In the kitchen. I'll call her. Peggy! Peggy!

(Enter PEGGY R. 4.).

Joel—Peggy, have yew seed anyone near my desk tew-night?

Peggy—Nope, not er soul. Why, I hopes dere ain't anyting wrong,

sir?

Joel—Wrong? Everything's wrong! I have been robbed.

Peggy—Hully gee! Dat's hard lines. But I'll stake me loife dat I kin name de guy dat done de trick. Where's dat feller Hartman?

Joel—Why, up-stairs in his room, I s'pose.

Peggy—Dollars ter doughnuts he ain't. If he ain't flew de coop, I'll go croak.

Joel—Run up, gal, and see if he's thar.

(*Exit* PEGGY R. 1.).

Joel—This is an awful blow, Matilda. But it kain't be possible thet he took it. Why, he seemed so nice and polished like.

Mrs. Haskum—You can't always tell about them city fellers, Joel.

(*Enter* PEGGY R. 1.).

Peggy—Just what I t'ought. He's beat it. Say, do youse know who dat man was? Well, I'll tell yer. He's an escaped convict. He most likely come out here ter 'scape ther perleece. Dat guy should now be doin' time fer forgery.

Joel—So thet's the kind of hairpin I have been harboring in my household and treatin' with the same respect as one of my family. And this is the way he repays me! But how did he know whar tew find the key? Thet's what gits me. Not a livin' soul outside of this household knows whar I keep my keys. Somebuddy helped him, and somebuddy right hyar in this house. I'm goin' tew git tew the bot-om of this thing and find aout the one thet's mixed up in it. It'll go hard with the one thet done it, let it be who it may. Neither of yew know nuthin' abaout it. Whar's Sam? Confound him, mebbe he knows suthin' abaout it.

(*Enter* SAM L. C., yawning).

Joel—Sam!

Sam—(*Jumps and falls over chair*). Durn et! Dew yew want ter scare a feller tew death?

Joel—(*Taking him by the collar and yanking him to his feet*). I'll scare yew worse'n thet if yew don't answer me truthfully.

Sam—Ouch—yew hurt!

Joel—Hurt! Yew need be thankful if yew don't git your blame head busted.

Mrs. Haskum—Don't be harsh with the boy, Joel; it isn't likely that he knows anything about it.

Joel—I'll find aout what he knows. Sam, have you seed anyone near my desk tew-night?

Sam—Yes, I seed—

Joel—Quick—who did you see?

Sam—The feller with the plug hat.

Joel—Who, Hartman?

Sam—Yes; he took a tin box aout of thar.

Joel—So, it was him, after all. But how did he git the key? Dew yew know thet?

Sam—Yes; I gut it fur him.

Joel—Dew yew mean tew say thet yew give him the key tew thet desk?

Sam—Yep! He give me ten dollars. Said he had tew use the box tew-night.

Joel—(*Shaking SAM*). Yew confounded young idiot! Dew yew know what was in thet box?

Sam—Nuthin', I thought ten dollars a good price fur thet old box.

Joel—Yew young fool, my money was in thet box!

Sam—It were in thar, but it hain't naow.

Joel—I don't s'pose it air in thar naow. He's probably taken it aout by this time. Yew young scoundrel, I've a good mind tew trash yew within an inch of your life.

Sam—I sold him the box.

Joel—Of course yew did, yew young scalawag, and yew have gut gall tew stand thar and keep tellin' me abaout it?

Sam—I said I sold him the box. Hyar's your money. (*Hands him money*).

Joel—(*Surprised*). What?

Sam—Thar's your money—every gosh durned dollar. Thet's once in his life thet Sleepy Sam was wide awake. I thought it durned funny of him givin' as much to git thet old box. After he gut it, he heerd someone comin'. Thet must uv been yew comin' in frum the barn.

Joel—Yes, he was hyar when I kum in.

Sam—So he gives me the box and sends me intew thet room, and then I seed your name on the box, so I opened it and seed all thet money. Then I didn't wonder why he were so anxious tew git it; and then I takes the money aout and gives him back the empty box. Guess I stuck him. Won't he be rippin' when he finds the box empty.

Joel—God bless yew, boy, I'm proud of yew. Yew have really saved an old man's life, fur it would have broken my heart tew see this old place go aout of the family. (*Embraces SAM*).

Peggy—Holy smokes, Sleepy, but yer a wonder! Who would ever

t'ink dat laid in yer system?

Sam—Yew kain't allus tell haow hard a mule's goin' ter kick 'till he hits yew.

Peggy—Mr. Haskum, I s'pose youse will be radder s'prised when I tells yer dat de guy what robbed youse to-night is none odder den me step-fadder, Jim Blakely—better known ter youse as Frank Hartman.

Joel—Kin it be possible? Wonder how he managed tew escape?

Peggy—Lord only knows. He's a slippery cuss. Gee, but youse kin bet dat dere will be er big reward offered fer him.

(*Enter JASON L. C.*).

Jason—Then, durn my jumkins, thet air reward belongs tew me!

Joel—Belongs tew yew? What dew yew mean?

Jason—I mean thet I got the durn skunk—gut him good and snug tew, locked up in my boxed stall, and my boy Jake and young Hank Green air watchin' him with their shotguns, so thar hain't much danger of his gettin' away. I told yew tew keep your eye peeled fur thet cuss, Joel.

Joel—Thet's right, Jason. I'll have more 'spect fur your judgment hereafter.

Jason—Well, I must be a-goin'. Gut tew look arter my prizner. Powerful bizzy man tew-night. Evenin', folks, evenin' (*Exit Jason L. C.*).

Joel—Evenin', Jason. I s'pose Jason'll brag abaout thet fur the next five years. Sam, my boy, I'm proud of yew. I've gut a proposition tew make tew yew. If yew will brace up and try and dew what's right in the future, I promise tew give yew a share in everything thet's made on the farm.

Sam—Great Jehosophat! Dew yew mean it? Gosh, Mrs. Haskum, I'll bring in the hull wood-pile right naow.

Joel—No, thet's not necessary. And Sam, when yew and Peggy gits married, I'll give yew a nice weddin' present tew.

Sam—Peggy says as haow she won't have me.

Peggy—(*Edging up to him*). Yes, but mebbe after a little persuadin' I kin be made ter change me moind. Gee, Sleepy, youse ain't so worse at dat, and if youse still wants me—

Sam—Yew bet I dew!

Peggy—Den I guess I'll take er chance and help make yer loife miserable.

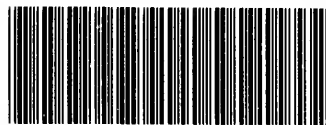
Sam—(*Embracing her*). Gosh, hum was never like this!

—CURTAIN.—

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